

# CHAPTER 2

## TUCSON PLANNING CONTEXT

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# TUCSON PLANNING CONTEXT

The City of Tucson is an evolving community. Understanding that evolution is important to addressing the range of topics covered in the City's General Plan. This chapter begins with highlights of Tucson over time, from prehistoric days to 2001, the year the previous General Plan was adopted. Next it focuses on recent years,

2001–2012, looking first at variables that help define the community, from its natural setting, to its demographics to land use patterns, and then at City plans, policies, and initiatives undertaken during this period. The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of how values and visions identified through various activities in recent years served as a starting point for Plan Tucson.

## Tucson Over Time<sup>1</sup>

Tucson is the oldest permanently settled community in the United States, going back nearly 2,000 years to the Hohokam Culture. Three hundred years ago, the Franciscan Order arrived

in Tucson and established Mission San Xavier del Bac, a mission that has been restored and continues to serve the Tohono O'odham Nation. The Tucson Presido, established in 1775, is the official birthplace of the City of Tucson. The Southern Pacific Railroad, which reached Tucson in 1880, improved access for new settlers and brought goods from the east. That year the population reached 8,000. Thirty-two years later, in 1912, Arizona became the 48th state in the Union.

In 1862 the Morrill Act provided federal funds for the establishment of land-grant colleges to focus on agriculture and mining. In 1891, the University of Arizona opened its doors

<sup>1</sup>A Brief History of Tucson; [http://cms3.tucsonaz.gov/history/tucson\\_history](http://cms3.tucsonaz.gov/history/tucson_history)





**Old Main, University of Arizona, 1889.**

with 32 students and 40 donated acres. The University of Arizona's enrollment reached 13,058 students in 1960 and over 34,000 by 2001.

In 1919, Tucson had the distinction of opening the first municipally owned airport in the nation. The airport was later moved to a larger site which, in 1927, was dedicated by Charles Lindbergh for two Tucsonans who had lost their lives in aviation accidents— Lieutenants Samuel H. Davis and Oscar Monthan. Davis-Monthan Field accommodated both civil and military aircraft and became the largest municipally owned airport in the nation.<sup>2</sup> The airfield was transitioned to full military operations in 1940, playing a major role in World War II (WWII). Today, Davis-Monthan Air Force Base supports U.S. military operations around the world. As of 2011, the Base had 6,000 military and 1,700 civilian personnel. In 1941, the City

purchased the current site of the Tucson International Airport, and the Tucson Airport Authority was established in 1948 to operate the airport.

Between 1940 and the end of WWII, Tucson grew from about 40,000 to 120,000. This rapid growth came about for three key reasons. First, military personnel who had trained at Davis-Monthan returned to Tucson after WWII to settle down. Second, the advent of affordable, residential air conditioning made living in a hot climate more appealing to many. Third, the emerging, post-war, automobile-owning middle class sought single family houses on large lots, which were readily available in Tucson. The fast paced growth continued after WWII, and by 1960, Tucson boasted a population of 220,000, and by 2000, a population of 486,699, making Tucson the 30th largest city in the nation.

In the 1950s, the City began an aggressive campaign to annex the subdivisions that had sprung up outside the City limits.<sup>3</sup> Beginning in the 1960s, real estate development sustained local growth, fueled in part by the interest of California investors in “cheap” land and the advent of the “retirement community.” In 1960, the City covered 70 square miles, which more than tripled by 2000 to 227 square miles (*Exhibit T-1*).

#### EXHIBIT T-1 Tucson Population & Land Area Change

| Year | Population | % Change in Population | Land Area (sq. miles) | % Change in Land Area (sq. miles) |
|------|------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1990 | 405,371    |                        | 157.5                 |                                   |
| 2000 | 486,699    | +20.0%                 | 195.5                 | +24.1%                            |
| 2010 | 520,116    | +6.8%                  | 227.7                 | +16.5%                            |

<sup>2</sup>Davis-Monthan Air Force History; <http://www.dm.af.mil/library/factsheets/factsheet.asp?id=4318>; Posted 6/2/2009

<sup>3</sup>Tucson Post World War II Residential Subdivision Development, 1945 – 1973 October 2007, City of Tucson Urban Planning and Design Department, Historic and Cultural Resources; October 2007 [http://cms3.tucsonaz.gov/sites/default/files/imported/resources/publications/publications/wwii\\_102207.pdf](http://cms3.tucsonaz.gov/sites/default/files/imported/resources/publications/publications/wwii_102207.pdf)

The Hughes Aircraft Company, now Raytheon Missile Systems, opened in 1951 to produce missiles and other military equipment. In the 1950s, Hughes employed over 5,000 workers, becoming the largest technology employer in Arizona and spurring growth in the region.

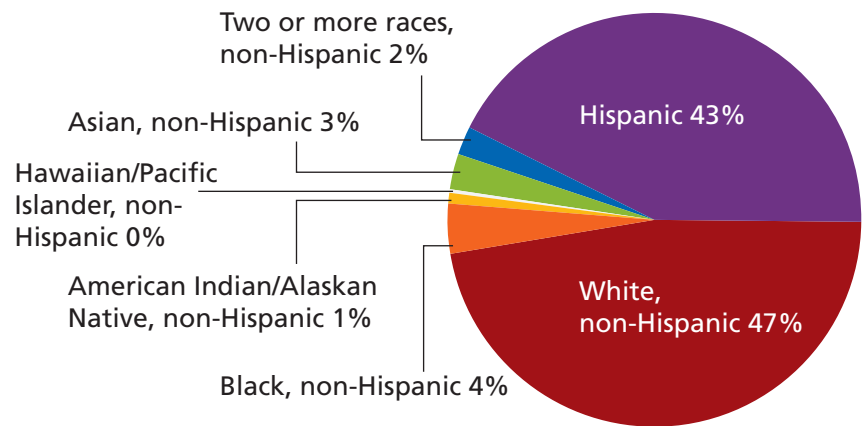
Along with real estate and technology, tourism has been a major contributor to the local economy. The warm, dry climate; unique natural environment; Hispanic and Native American cultures; and the western ranching lifestyle have lured visitors to Tucson since the 1920s. Tourism dollars rose from \$28.5 million in 1954 to \$900 million in 1959, a thirty-two fold increase in only five years. By 2000 tourism dollars had reached \$1.8 billion.

## Tucson in Recent Years

**Natural Setting:** Tucson is located in the Sonoran Desert at an approximate elevation of 2,400 feet. The City is surrounded by mountain ranges and federally-protected lands. Tucsonans enjoy 350 days of sunshine per year with an average daytime temperature of 83 degrees. Average annual rainfall in Tucson is 12 inches per year. Precipitation typically falls during two seasons, with half of the rainfall coming during the summer monsoon season and half during the winter months. The Sonoran Desert is home to a diverse array of plants and animals. Some are found nowhere else in the world, including the iconic saguaro cactus and the ironwood tree.

**Population:** In 2011, Tucson had a diverse population of 525,798 people, with 47.1% identifying as White, non-Hispanic and 42.8% identifying as Hispanic (*Exhibit T-2*). The median age of Tucsonans was 33.8 years with

## EXHIBIT T-2 Racial/Ethnic Composition of Tucson, 2010



Data Source: U.S. Census and American Community Survey

children under 18 years representing 22.3% and people over 65 years representing 12.0% of the population.<sup>4</sup> Tucson's population increased by 6.9% between 2000 and 2010.

In 2011, the median household income was \$35,362, while the national median income was \$50,502. Median household income increased by 18.2% between 2000 and 2010 and fell 2.9% between 2010 and 2011. *Exhibit T-3* presents income trends.

**Economy:** The University of Arizona plays a prominent role in the local economy and was the largest regional employer in 2012 with 11,604 full-time employees. The University's economic impact is approximately \$2.1 billion annually. Raytheon Missile Systems, with 11,500 employees, is the region's second largest employer (See *Exhibit ED-2*, on page 3.12).

Tucson is a national leader in several fields. In 2011, *Business Facilities* ranked Tucson first in the nation as an Alternative Energy Industry Leader and sixth in Aerospace and Defense manufacturing. Tucson is also recognized as a leader in the optics, astronomy, and

<sup>4</sup>Demographic data for 2011 is from the American Community Survey.

medical industries. In 2007, Tucson was designated by the United States Department of Energy as one of 25 Solar America Cities, acknowledging the City's efforts to accelerate the adoption of solar energy technologies for a cleaner, more secure energy future. Tucson Regional Economic Opportunities, Inc. estimates that more than 1,200 high-tech businesses in the region employ more than 50,000 workers.

Tourism is a large part of Tucson's economy. The Metropolitan Tucson Convention and Visitors Bureau estimates that almost 22,000 jobs were supported by tourism in Tucson and Pima County in 2011 and \$2.4 billion in direct travel spending was generated by visitors in the same year. Events

such as the Tucson Gem and Mineral Show and the El Tour de Tucson bicycle race bring out-of-town visitors and associated revenue to Tucson. A 2007 report conducted for the Metropolitan Tucson Convention and Visitors Bureau estimated more than \$100 million was spent locally during the 2007 Gem Show, with food/lodging/local transportation being the largest category of expenditures. The associated local taxes paid were over \$9 million, constituting about 4% of the City's sales tax receipts that year.

Tucson experienced the recession of 2007–2009 in much the same way as the rest of the country. Median household income in Tucson was \$35,362 in 2011, below the national median household income of \$50,054. While national household income fell 1.5% from 2010 to 2011, household income in Tucson fell 2.9% in the same period (*Exhibit T-3*). The unemployment rate rose from a low of 3.6% in 2007 to a high of 9.4% in 2010 and then dipped to 8.4% in 2011. *Exhibit T-4* presents employment data for Tucson between 2001 and 2011.

**Education:** Seven school districts operate within the City limits, including Amphitheater, Catalina, Flowing Wells, Foothills, Sunnyside, Tucson Unified, and Vail. Elementary, middle, and high school education is provided through over 800 public and private schools within the City. The largest post-secondary educational institutions are the University of Arizona, with an enrollment of 39,236 students in 2011, and Pima Community College, with an enrollment of 62,199 students in the same year. Five of six Pima Community College campuses are located within the City.

The City of Tucson supports lifelong learning through a variety of programs for different age groups. In 2011 the Parks and Recreation programs served

**EXHIBIT T-3 Median Household Income in Tucson**

| Year | Median Household Income |
|------|-------------------------|
| 2011 | \$35,362                |
| 2010 | \$36,428                |
| 2009 | \$35,565                |
| 2008 | \$36,640                |
| 2007 | \$36,096                |
| 2006 | \$36,095                |
| 2005 | \$34,241                |
| 2000 | \$30,819                |

**EXHIBIT T-4 Employment in Tucson**

| Year | Employment | Unemployment Rate |
|------|------------|-------------------|
| 2011 | 426,406    | 8.40%             |
| 2010 | 433,795    | 9.40%             |
| 2009 | 441,966    | 9.00%             |
| 2008 | 446,651    | 5.60%             |
| 2007 | 438,680    | 3.60%             |
| 2006 | 429,323    | 3.90%             |
| 2005 | 418,214    | 4.50%             |
| 2004 | 417,457    | 4.60%             |
| 2003 | 405,584    | 5.30%             |
| 2002 | 399,021    | 5.70%             |
| 2001 | 395,453    | 4.30%             |

Data Source for Exhibits T3-T4: U.S. Census and American Community Survey



over 250,000 seniors through its senior center programming, more than 50,000 adults and children through its therapeutic recreation programs, and 4,300 youth through its out-of-school programming.

**Activities:** Recreational activities are varied and the region's mild climate encourages outdoor recreation. As of 2011, the Tucson metropolitan area had more than 27,000 acres of park lands, 732 miles of designated bikeways, and more than 40 public and private golf courses. In the same year, the City Parks and Recreation Department managed 125 parks, 10 year-round and 6 seasonal swimming pools, 16 recreation centers, 3 senior centers and 9 senior clubs, 5 golf courses, and 202 ball fields and multipurpose fields. In 2011, well over 1.1 million people attended classes, events, programs, or facilities managed by the Parks and Recreation Department.

Tucson hosts many sporting events, including University of Arizona intercollegiate athletic events. The most prominent of these include the Wildcats football and basketball games;

the Tucson Padres, a Triple-A affiliate of the San Diego Padres; and the Fort Lowell Shootout, a youth winter soccer tournament that attracts players nationally and internationally.

### **Development Patterns & Transportation Networks:**

To a large extent, land use patterns in Tucson are a result of the transportation system. The relatively flat topography has enabled the development of a street grid pattern in which the major roads (arterials) support commercial uses and the smaller streets (collectors and residential) accommodate residential uses. Interstates 10 and 19 are the only major highways that traverse Tucson, making arterials and collectors the primary means of traffic circulation.

Similar to many cities across the nation, Tucson has taken a greater interest in transit in recent years due in part to higher gas prices, increased sensitivity to environmental issues, and a desire for a more walkable, less car dependent community. The public transit system in Tucson is comprised of bus service operated for the City by Sun Tran. As of 2011, the bus service was



**Aerial view of University area looking east.**

made up of 40 fixed routes with 20 million passenger trips, an increase in transit ridership of 36% in ten years. A new addition to the transit system is the Modern Streetcar, scheduled to be completed in late 2013. The system, designed to connect the University of Arizona, the Fourth Avenue Business District, downtown Tucson, and historic westside neighborhoods, is anticipated to not only provide an alternative to the automobile, but also to generate more public-private development along the route.

**Neighborhoods:** Neighborhoods are integral to Tucson's sense of place. The Neighborhood Preservation Ordinance was enacted to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of residents and to protect residents from neighborhood deterioration. As of October 2012, there were 134 neighborhood associations registered with the City.

Housing has historically been affected by market factors including consumer preferences, land availability, and household size. Other factors that influence Tucson's housing stock are demographics; transportation access, including public transit; and economics. In addition to wanting housing that meets family needs, Tucsonans value safe, accessible, and identifiable neighborhoods in which to live.

The character of Tucson's neighborhoods is defined, in large part, by architecture and historic resources. As of 2012, Tucson had 31 National Register Historic Districts, 6 locally-designated Historic District Zones, and 2 Neighborhood Preservation Zones. Architectural styles are diverse and represent many building periods, extending from the mid-to late-1840s through the 1960s. Styles include Sonoran, Territorial, Queen Anne, Mission Revival, Colonial Revival, Art Deco, Craftsman Bungalow, Moderne, International, and post WWII Suburban Ranch.

Historic home with recent renovations.





The City works to address the housing needs of all people, including low and extremely-low income people, and to meet the needs of the elderly, people with physical and emotional disabilities, the homeless, and those requiring group and foster care. The City's Housing and Community Development Department functions as both the local Public Housing Authority (PHA) and the Community Development Office. In 2012 the PHA owned and operated 1,500 public housing units and managed 5,000 Section 8 housing contracts throughout the community.

**Culture:** Tucson's rich culture is founded in its heritage, architecture, demographics, and economy. The Tucson region has over 500 non-profit organizations focused on arts and culture. Cultural events and festivals are held throughout the year and cater to people of all ages and backgrounds. Well-known events that attract visitors from outside the region include Tucson Meet Yourself, focusing on cultural diversity and food; Dia de Los Muertos All Souls Procession; the Fourth Avenue Street Fair; the Mariachi Conference; the Tucson Rodeo; and the world's largest Gem and Mineral Show.

Music and theater performances are abundant in Tucson, and popular venues include the Temple of Music and Art, the Tucson Music Hall, the Fox Theater, the Rialto Theater, and the University of Arizona Centennial Hall. Prominent museums include the Tucson Museum of Art, the Center for Creative Photography, the Children's Museum, the Pima Air and Space Museum, the Museum of Contemporary Art, and



**Walk-in sculpture in Barrio Anita made of bicycle parts.**

the University of Arizona Art Museum. Major statewide cultural institutions such as the Arizona Historical Society, Arizona Opera Company, Arizona Theatre Company, and the Tucson Symphony Orchestra were founded in Tucson.

The Tucson Pima Arts Council administers the Percent for Art programs for the City and Pima County. One percent of the construction budget of major public construction projects is put toward the creation and installation of public art pieces. Since 1986, over 200 public art projects have been completed in metropolitan Tucson and Pima County.

**Prior Planning Efforts:** Since adoption of the 2001 Tucson General Plan, the City's Mayor and Council have endorsed or approved a variety of studies, plans, and reports and have adopted policies and directives. A review of these documents was conducted in the preparation of Plan Tucson (*Exhibit T-5*).



**EXHIBIT T-5 Plans, Studies, & Other Initiatives Approved by Mayor & Council**

| Plan, Study or Report                                                         | Year        |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| 5-year Agency Plan - Public Housing                                           | 2011        |
| 2040 Regional Transportation Plan                                             | 2010        |
| Affordable Housing in Downtown Tucson                                         | 2004        |
| Avra Valley Habitat Conservation Plan                                         | 2010        |
| City of Tucson and Pima County 5-Year HUD Consolidated Plan                   | 2010        |
| City of Tucson Strategic Technology Plan                                      | 2010        |
| Downtown Infrastructure Study                                                 | 2007        |
| Downtown Links Urban Overlay District: Background Study and District Proposal | 2010        |
| Downtown Parking Master Plan                                                  | 2004        |
| Downtown Urban Design Reference Manual                                        | 2008        |
| Drought Response and Preparedness Plan                                        | 2006        |
| Eastern Pima County Trail System Master Plan                                  | 2010        |
| El Paso and Southwestern Greenway                                             | 2011        |
| Emergency Operations Plan                                                     | 2007        |
| Feldman's Neighborhood Design Manual                                          | 2009        |
| Framework for Advancing Sustainability                                        | 2008        |
| Grant Road Improvement Plan                                                   | In progress |
| Greater Southlands Habitat Conservation Plan                                  | 2008        |
| Greater Tucson Solar Development Plan                                         | 2009        |
| Greater Tucson Strategic Energy Plan                                          | 2005        |
| Greyhound Transportation and Feasibility Study                                | 2005        |
| High Capacity Transit (HCT) System Plan                                       | 2009        |
| Historic Landmark Signs Preservation Program                                  | 2011        |
| Human Services Plan, Fiscal Years 2007 & 2008                                 | 2005        |
| Land Use Code Simplification Project (Uniform Development Code)               | 2012        |
| Jefferson Park Neighborhood Design Manual                                     | 2011        |
| Oracle Area Revitalization Project                                            | 2011        |
| City of Tucson Parks and Recreation Ten-Year Strategic Service Plan           | 2006        |
| Patriot Act's Critical Infrastructure                                         | 2001        |
| Pima Cultural Plan: Needs Analysis and Strategies                             | 2008        |

**EXHIBIT T-5 Plans, Studies, & Other Initiatives Approved by Mayor & Council** (continued)

| Plan, Study or Report                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Year        |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Plan for Annexation                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 2004        |
| Planned Land Use Data Conversion Project                                                                                                                                                                                                       | 2010        |
| Regional Transportation Authority Plan                                                                                                                                                                                                         | 2006        |
| Regional Transportation Plan                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | 2010        |
| Rio Nuevo Master Plan, 10-Year Development and Long-Range Vision                                                                                                                                                                               | 2001        |
| Ronstadt Transit Center Transportation and Feasibility Study                                                                                                                                                                                   | 2005        |
| Silverbell Road Design Concept Study                                                                                                                                                                                                           | In progress |
| Solar Integration Plan                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | 2009        |
| Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan                                                                                                                                                                                                               | 2001        |
| Specific Plans (Subregional, Redevelopment, Area and Neighborhood Plans) - years vary, from 1970's to 2009                                                                                                                                     | varies      |
| Stone Avenue Corridor Project                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | 2006        |
| Sustainable Land Use Code Integration Project                                                                                                                                                                                                  | In progress |
| Transit-Oriented Development Handbook                                                                                                                                                                                                          | 2009        |
| Transportation Access Management Guidelines for the City of Tucson                                                                                                                                                                             | 2003        |
| Tucson Economic Blueprint, Strategic Analysis Report                                                                                                                                                                                           | 2006        |
| Tucson Fire Strategic Plan: 2009-2011                                                                                                                                                                                                          | 2009        |
| Tucson Historic Warehouse Arts District Master Plan                                                                                                                                                                                            | 2004        |
| Tucson Modern Streetcar Project                                                                                                                                                                                                                | 2009        |
| Tucson Post World War II Residential Subdivision Development Report (1945-1973)                                                                                                                                                                | 2007        |
| Tucson Regional Plan for Bicycling                                                                                                                                                                                                             | 2009        |
| Tucson Solar Initiative                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | 2009        |
| University of Arizona Comprehensive Campus Plan Update                                                                                                                                                                                         | 2009        |
| Update to the Water Plan: 2000-2050                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 2008        |
| Urban Environmental Accords                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | 2005        |
| Urban Landscape Framework                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 2008        |
| U.S. Mayor's Climate Protection Agreement                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 2006        |
| Water and Wastewater Infrastructure, Supply and Planning Study <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phase 1 (2009) &amp; Phase 2 (2009) Final Reports</li> <li>• 2011-2015 Action Plan for Water Sustainability (February 2010)</li> </ul> | 2009        |
| Water Efficiency: Water Conservation Program Recommendations for Tucson Water's Future                                                                                                                                                         | 2006        |



## Community Values & Visions

Long-term planning for a community, such as that done for a General Plan, should acknowledge shared values and envision a future built on those values. The 2001 General Plan was informed by the 1997 Livable Tucson Vision Program, which explored Tucsonans' values and visions for the city through a series of forums and workshops. Subsequent to that program and the adoption of the 2001 Plan, there were further efforts initiated by both governmental and nongovernmental entities to understand and integrate values and visions into community planning. These efforts included Town Halls; Community Conversations; and in 2010 the Imagine Greater Tucson Project (IGT), a regional project focused on producing a vision for the Eastern Pima County region.

These visioning efforts provided a starting place for Plan Tucson. Rather than conducting a separate visioning effort, the Plan Tucson approach was to:

- review the values and visions provided through the other efforts to determine if there were any basic inconsistencies

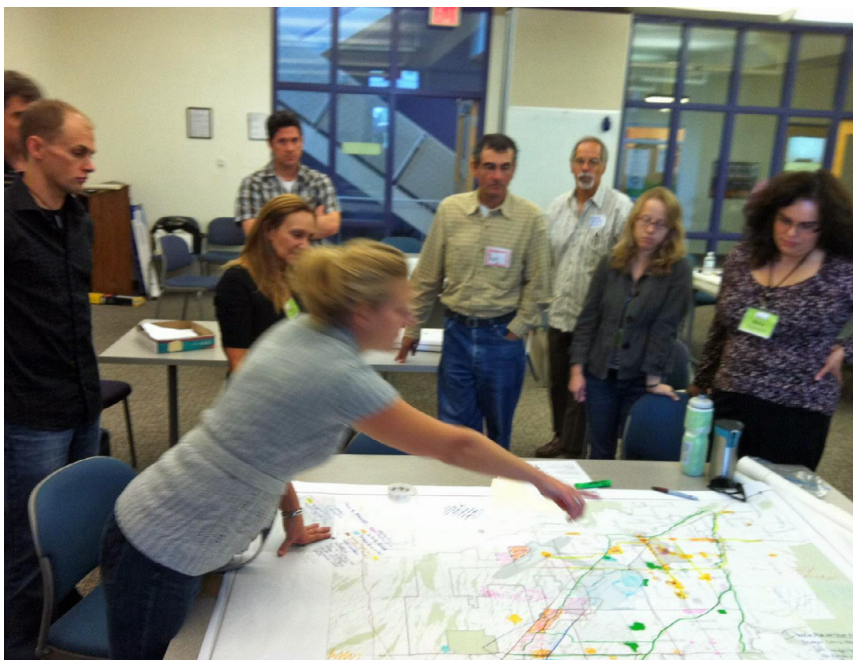
- explore with Plan Tucson participants their aspirations for Tucson's future and to consider those in light of the earlier values and visions
- look carefully at participants' input during Plan Tucson workshops, meetings, and forums for any underlying values that ran counter to those identified through the other efforts

This approach revealed, perhaps not surprisingly, that there was remarkable consistency between values overtly stated in previous efforts and those that were implied in the goal and policy development process for Plan Tucson. In summary those shared values are:

- good jobs
- a strong economy
- quality education
- a clean and safe built environment
- a protected natural environment
- a healthy population
- cohesive and attractive neighborhoods
- access to multiple forms of transportation
- a vibrant and diverse cultural life
- a sustainable development pattern
- a distinctive character for both Tucson and for the region, and
- an efficient, effective, and transparent government

These values resonate in the goals and policies that are presented in Chapter 3, which is divided into three focus areas: (1) the Social and Economic Environment, (2) the Natural Environment, and (3) the Built Environment. All the Plan Tucson Goals are presented in on the next page, and the goals are repeated as applicable at the beginning of each focus area.

**Community meeting working on smart growth issues.**



# GOALS

## The City strives for:

- 1** A mix of well-maintained, energy-efficient housing options with multi-modal access to basic goods and services.
- 2** A stabilized local economy with opportunities for diversified economic growth supported by high-level, high-quality public infrastructure, facilities, and services.
- 3** A safe community and secure neighborhoods.
- 4** A community whose economic stability and sense of place reflects its commitment to arts and culture and its care for the natural environment.
- 5** A healthy community physically, mentally, and environmentally.
- 6** A sustainable urban food system.
- 7** An educated citizenry.
- 8** Timely, accessible, and inclusive processes to actively engage a diverse community in City policy, program, and project planning.
- 9** A reputation as a national leader in the development and use of locally renewable energy technologies, water conservation, waste diversion and recovery, and other emerging environmentally-sensitive industries.
- 10** Less dependence on carbon-based energy and greater energy independence.
- 11** A community that is resilient and adaptive to climate change.
- 12** Abundant and appropriate use of native plants and trees.







- 13** A network of healthy, natural open space managed for multiple benefits.
- 14** A secure, high quality, reliable, long-term supply of water for humans and the natural environment.
- 15** A comfortable, attractive, and pollution-free environment.
- 16** Sound, efficient, ecological policies and practices in government and in the private sector.
- 17** Well-maintained public facilities and infrastructure that support coordinated cost-effective service delivery for current and future residents.
- 18** A community that respects and integrates historic resources into the built environment and uses them for the advancement of multiple community goals.
- 19** Strategic public and private investments for long-term economic, social, and environmental sustainability.
- 20** An urban form that conserves natural resources, improves and builds on existing public infrastructure and facilities, and provides an interconnected multi-modal transportation system to enhance the mobility of people and goods.